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SUBJECT: SOMALIA CAMPAIGN SPEECHES IDENTIFY FRONTRUNNERS

REF: a) DJIBOUTI 87

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY. On January 29, the fifteen candidates for President each made a speech to Parliament. At the end of the presentations, most MPs agreed that TFG Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein Nur Adde and ARS Chairman Sheikh Sharif Ahmed remained the frontrunners. Nur Adde focused on his record of reconciliation and the results he achieved as Prime Minister. Sheikh Sharif presented a message focused on the importance of Islam as the basis for solutions to Somalias ills. Sharif won the most applause of all the candidates yet Nur Adde was also very well-received. Some of the candidates delivered remarks that many regarded as prime ministerial speeches, to indicate their capacity to serve in the number two spot. Mohamed Qanyare Afrah used the opportunity to announce his withdrawal from the race. With the speeches now concluded, all preparations are now set for the January 30 elections. Prior to the elections, twelve additional ARS-nominated parliamentarians will take the oath of office. The three-phase electoral process will likely last through the night but all were confident that a new president would emerge by January 31. End Summary.

Campaign Speeches:  
A Window on the Candidates  
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12. (SBU) Beginning at about 6:15 p.m. on January 29, the fifteen candidates vying for Somalias presidency began making their speeches. (For a list of the candidates, see refTel). Each candidate was allotted fifteen minutes for their remarks and the electoral commission strictly enforced the time limit. The candidates presented remarks in alphabetical order, by their first names. Many of the candidates identified the crisis of leadership as the source of most of Somalias problems. They each offered, to varying degrees, priorities they would address if elected. The first presentation by Abdirahman Abdi Hussein, currently Somalias Ambassador to Iran. Hussein said he would focus on poverty as the root cause of violence, and then address the security situation by seeking diverse perspectives across all groups. Former warlord Ahmed Hashi Mahmoud said he would focus on eliminating clanism and would serve as an example for all other Somalis to follow. He won applause when he stated that Now, the entire world rules Somalia; it is now time for Somalia to rule itself.

13. (SBU) Ali Hashi Dore advocated for the introduction of political parties to prevent all the candidates from focusing on personal ambitions, which he said had undermined all of the previous failed peace processes. He reminded the MPs that this was a transitional government and asked them to elect the man who can best serve as father to the transitional process. Former Prime Minister Ali Khalif Guled delivered a prime ministerial candidates speech, focusing on his proven record and ability to bring opposing groups together to effectively manage a power sharing arrangement. He asked all Somalis to read the constitution and the charter so they would each understand their personal responsibilities. Another former PM, Hassan Abshir Farah delivered a speech for the number two job. In his opening remarks, Farah stated that his first order of business would be to appoint a strong PM and a quality cabinet to re-instill trust, build peace and make progress.

Will Number 13 be lucky for Nur Adde?  
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14. (SBU) Now that he is a candidate for president, some MPs insist on referring to Nur Adde as the former Prime Minister, making the point that he cannot use the official state platform to advance his campaign. As the thirteenth candidate to present his speech, Nur Adde began by clearly stating that he is the best candidate because his focus on reconciliation yielded the tangible results of an expanded parliament. He told the audience that after much effort and discussions between the TFG and the ARS, his leadership has helped make the Djibouti process a success. He said that reconciliation must continue and he pledged to roll up his sleeves to continue the work he has begun. Nur Adde said that his top priority would be to create an effective government of national unity.

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15. Nur Adde offered a laundry list of priorities, beginning with the institution of law and order, respect of the Charter and laws of the country, and economic development and reconstruction. The former PM said he would move toward the creation of political parties and elections at the end of the transitional period, humanitarian access, financial systems, and press freedom. He promised to give special consideration for human rights and the role of civil society. Nur Adde's speech was clear and he appeared much more charismatic than usual. He was also the only candidate to distribute (in Somali) a hard copy of his remarks. His focus on reconciliation won him solid applause from the audience.

## Sheikh Sharif Offers an Islamic Olive Branch

¶6. (SBU) Sheikh Sharif delivered his speech directly after Nur Adde. The audience, especially from the ARS-nominated MPs, loudly exhorted the ARS Chairman and newly sworn-in MP. Although his message at the January 26 opening of the meeting in Djibouti focused on reconciliation, Sheikh Sharif's campaign speech was notable in its focus on Islam as the foundation for change. Sharif began by stating that all of Somalia's problems are interconnected and based on political conflict. He said now that more people are participating in the political process, the population is ready to do its part in improving security. He linked the deterioration of the economic sector to the worsening security situation. Sharif told the MPs, We can solve all of these problems by working together, as equals, and reinforced by our religion.

¶7. (SBU) Sharif said that Islamic Sharia law teaches that dialogue is the basis for conflict resolution and that justice and reconciliation must be the foundation for a peaceful Somalia. He cautioned that many religious ideas appear to be part of Islam but in an allusion to al-Shabaab, he noted that they are ideologies that have nothing to do with the religion. Sharif gained hearty applause when he said that as president, he would appoint religious scholars to help the population make the distinction between true and false Islamic doctrines. In addition to religion, Sharif had a strong message about security, praising Somalia's former military officers as capable of helping its forces secure the country and avoid spilling any more blood. He concluded by stating that religious groups are now carrying out tasks that should be done by the government and his mission is to once again have government in the lead, serving and being accountable to its people.

### A Few Surprises

¶8. (SBU) When it came time for former warlord and TFG MP Mohamed Qanyare Afrah to make his speech, he announced that he would be brief because his only message was that he was withdrawing his candidacy. He thanked all of his supporters and said that all would move together in one voting block to support the best man for the job. Many saw this move as yet another way for him to keep relevant and exert influence in the next administration by delivering his supporters.

¶9. (SBU) Muslah Mohamed Siyad, the son of former president Siad Barre, received heavy applause and cheers from the audience, even prior to his speech. Some have attributed this to financial incentives for his supporters and nostalgia among some for the comparatively prosperous pre 1991 years. Siyad delivered a brief message stating his intention to focus on rebuilding national identity and pride and re-establishing the dignity of Somalia. There is speculation that Siyad has the lead among the Darod, although there is an internal struggle among Darod sub-clans about how the clan should leverage its influence. Yusuf Al Azhari also delivered a solid performance focusing on his years of experience working within Somalia's government and his ideas on how to work with parliament to achieve sustainable peace. After the five hour session, the candidates departed for a long night of campaigning at the various hotels in Djibouti where the members of Somalia's unity government were choosing their favorites. On January 30, SRSG Ould-Abdallah announced that several ARS-nominated MPs who arrived overnight would be sworn in prior to the start of the election.

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### Comment

¶10. (SBU) Sheikh Sharif was not the only candidate to focus on religious themes. All of the candidates made reference to Islam during their speeches as a core value on which Somalia's reconstruction must be built. Several made specific mention of instituting Sharia law nationwide. Most candidates also made specific mention of the leadership crisis gripping Somalia. At the end of the session, many told us that Sharif looks like a clear frontrunner but the process is complicated and many other outcomes remain possible. Late evening on January 29, we met with Sheikh Sharif and told him that in the event he is elected, he must choose a strong Prime Minister from outside the ARS and a capable and representative cabinet. He agreed. On January 30, the MPs will cast their secret ballots and we expect that after at least two rounds of voting, sometime in the early morning hours, Somalia will have a new president.

SWAN

To view the entire SMART message, go to URL [http://repository.state.sgov.gov/\\_layouts/OSS\\_SearchResults.aspx?k=messageid:56512dc2-4a00-449b-80](http://repository.state.sgov.gov/_layouts/OSS_SearchResults.aspx?k=messageid:56512dc2-4a00-449b-80)